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ABSTRACT

A capstone course, entitled "Coordinating Seminar," has been developed at Rivier College, a small Roman Catholic liberal arts college in New England, as a vehicle for assessment in the Psychology Department. Assessment has been defined by Rivier College as a collegewide effort to document and verify the amount and quality of educational change in the students between the point of entry and point of completing an academic unit or sequence. To assess the degree to which psychology objectives were being achieved by students, the Coordinating Seminar reviews and coordinates the information about psychology that students have acquired throughout their undergraduate experience, while also focusing on career opportunities, graduate school preparation, and controversial issues in the field. Students are administered 13 weekly take-home and in-class tests based on chapters in the psychology text. Their final examination is an actual 1982-83 Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Psychology Achievement Test. Use of the GRE allows individual student scores to be analyzed to identify content domains in which students do well or poorly. Upon discovering that students did well on social-science-oriented questions, but not as well on experimental or natural-science-oriented questions, the department began to offer courses in cognitive psychology, history and systems, and physiological psychology on alternate years. A capstone course for psychology majors can be an effective vehicle for assessing departmental and institutional goals, but identifying areas of the psychology curriculum in which students are strongest and weakest. Includes a review of selected highlights in the history of assessment in higher education and psychology, a model of curriculum reform, a discussion of how various departments at Rivier College have initiated and strengthened program evaluation through classroom assessment, and course materials for the Coordinating Seminar.
(AC)

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The Senior Coordinating Seminar
As a Vehicle for
Assessment of the Major
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Abstract

This paper describes a capstone course titled "Coordinating Seminar" that is used as a vehicle for assessment of the psychology major at Rivier College. Selected highlights in the history of assessment in higher education and psychology are briefly reviewed and an emergent model for curricular reform is described. Also discussed is how various academic departments at Rivier College have initiated and strengthened program evaluation through classroom assessment. Seminar courses for majors can be effectively used as an important component of the comprehensive college-wide evaluation process.

Introduction

I'd like to begin by telling you a story from a collection of writings about the exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin, a fictional Islamic teacher and holy man (Shah, 1985, p.2). The title of the story is "Why we are here."

While walking home one evening along a deserted road, Nasrudin suddenly saw a troop of horsemen riding toward him. His imagination started to work, and he saw himself captured and sold as a slave or drafted into the army. He ran away as fast as he could and, climbing a wall into a nearby graveyard, tried to hide himself by lying down in an open tomb.

The horsemen, who were actually honest travelers, were puzzled at Nasrudin's strange behavior and followed him into the graveyard. They found him stretched out, tense and quivering.

"What are you doing in that grave?" the horsemen asked. "We saw you running away. Can we help you?"

Nasrudin, who now realized what had happened, said, "Just because you can ask a question does not mean that there is a straightforward answer to it. It all depends upon your viewpoint."

"If you must know, however: I am here because of you, and you are here because of me."

Why are we here? We are here because classroom assessment as a vehicle for generating educational improvement is a "hot topic" in undergraduate education today. State legislatures are demanding that colleges develop assessment plans. Accrediting associations

are focusing upon assessment of student learning. Self-study programs to help in departmental or program review have proliferated. Conferences on assessment, such as this one, abound.

The purpose of my paper today is to discuss a capstone course I have developed called "Coordinating Seminar" that is used as a vehicle for assessment of our psychology program at Rivier College, a small Roman Catholic liberal arts college in northern New England. My interest in the area of assessment dates back to 1986 when I became Chairperson of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Rivier College. As a member also of the College's subcommittee on "Assessment of Major Programs," I've had the double opportunity not only to assess psychology program objectives but also learn about the assessment activities of other departments at the College in fields as diverse as Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Education, English, Math, Modern Languages, and Nursing.

I will set the context for my discussion by briefly reviewing selected highlights in the history of assessment in higher education and psychology and describe the model for curricular reform that has emerged. I will also discuss how departments at Rivier College have initiated and strengthened program evaluation through classroom assessment. I think that this preliminary discussion will give you a better idea of what I'm trying to do in the Seminar and how classroom assessment can function as a part of the larger college-wide evaluation process that may be going on at the college where you teach.

National Assessment of Higher Education

If I were asked to identify highpoints in the development of this call for accountability in higher education,

Insert Table 1 about here

I would begin with the U.S. Department of Education's release of Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education, the 1984 national report that, in the words of its authors, "raised assessment to a first principle of improvement in higher education" (Adelman, 1986, p.v).

Next I would note the National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education hosted by the University of South Carolina at Columbia in October 1985. This conference proceeded to clarify the ramifications of assessment as a national policy issue and began discussion of ways to develop effective assessment structures in American higher education (Adelman, 1986). Ewell's (1985) book provides a good snapshot of innovative assessment programs occurring on various university and college campuses at that time and is considered to be "basic reading" for anyone interested in assessment in higher education (Eison, 1987, p. 152).

As time went on efforts at understanding what assessment means, why to do it, and how to do it became more specific. In 1987 and 1988 colleges and universities began to address the tough questions regarding the technical aspects of method,

instrumentation, and uses of assessment in major curriculum areas such as basic skills, general education, and the major (Halpern, 1987; Rossmann & El-Khawas, 1987, June).

In 1987, for example, self-study programs were initiated to help in departmental or program review (e.g., the Institutional Research Program for Higher Education (IRPHE) and Program Self-Assessment Service (PSAS) offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey). The Major Field Achievement Tests were also developed through a joint effort of ETS and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board to provide, in the words of the informational brochure, "an instrument for assessing mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge typically expected of students upon completion of an undergraduate major in a given subject." These tests would not only evaluate student academic achievement in the major but also provide national comparative data.

The 1988 essay by Mark I. Appelbaum (1988, pp. 117-137) titled "Assessment through the major" is an excellent example of this attempt to examine emerging assessment technologies which address the technical and operational aspects of assessment at the department or major program level.

The literature at this point is voluminous. Let it suffice to say that many people have been working hard and making progress in assessment. Recently the Association of American Colleges and the American Association for Higher Education have published sets of

principles for assessing student learning that synthesize important work already done (American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum, 1993, January; Association of American Colleges, 1992). Angelo and Cross (1993) have been able to put these principles into action by describing many current classroom assessment techniques in a manner that many college teachers will find extraordinarily useful.

National Assessment of the Psychology Major

We can see a parallel development to this national call for accountability in higher education in the efforts at assessing educational outcomes of psychology majors.

Insert Table 2 about here

Ever since the journal Teaching of Psychology (ToP) first appeared in 1971, many academic psychologists have described their efforts at assessing psychology curricula (see, for example, the special edition of ToP devoted entirely to the topic of "Undergraduate Psychology Education in the Next Decade," (see especially the article by Matthews (1982, pp. 49-52)).

The influence of this more specific call for assessment of the psychology major can also be seen in the various workshops that have been sponsored by the American Psychological Association (APA). I vividly remember attending an excellent workshop lead by

Thomas V. McGovern and co-sponsored by the Division 2 (Teaching of Psychology) at APA's 1987 annual convention. Titled "Developing and evaluating undergraduate psychology programs," this workshop proposed several models for evaluating and renewing department programs, focusing upon student characteristics, curricula models, career programming, alumni assessment, and liberal arts outcomes.

In 1987 psychologist Jim Eison (1987, Winter), in cooperation with the Center for Teaching and Learning at Southeast Missouri State University), compiled a valuable annotated bibliography listing over 20 assessment resources to aid in program development. Reprints are available from APA (Undergraduate Update, APA Office of Educational Affairs, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242).

A 1988 article by Diane Halpern (1988) in Teaching of Psychology presents useful guidelines for employing a multimethod approach to the task of evaluating and assessing the learning outcomes of psychology majors.

A "call to arms" was sounded by Jim Eison and Jim Palladino in a well-written article in 1988 titled "Psychology's assessment role" appearing in the APA Monitor (Eison & Palladino, 1988, September). They noted our profession's past oversights in addressing with assessment issues and they critically examined a variety of assessment activities for evaluating learning outcomes in the major. Most notably they described a model of how the results of program assessment can be used to aid in curriculum

reform.

During the 1990's new organizations have been formed within psychology (e.g., the Council of Undergraduate Psychology Programs (CUPP) founded in 1990) which sponsored symposia on the why, what, and how of psychology program assessment (For more information on CUPP write to: L. W. McCallum, Dept. of Psych., Augustana College, Rock Island, IL 61201).

The recent 1991 report by APA titled "Liberal Education. Study in Depth, and the Arts and Sciences Major--Psychology" (McGovern, Furumoto, Halpern, Kimble & McKeachie, 1991, June) is another example of this general review of arts and sciences majors that is taking place as a part of our nation's continuing commitment to advance and strengthen undergraduate liberal arts learning. The APA report not only describes ways to measure and evaluate psychology program outcomes and student learning, but also suggests how to achieve a common framework for psychology course requirements adaptable to a variety of institutional settings.

In 1991 APA held a national conference on "Enhancing the Quality of Undergraduate Education in Psychology" at St. Mary's College of Maryland that, in the words of one of its promoters, was "the first conference of its kind to be held on the topic of undergraduate psychology in thirty years" (Baum, 1992). One aim of the conference was to identify a set of essential principles for quality undergraduate programming which include: (1) clearly stated and achievable outcomes for curriculum and other program related

experiences; (2) multiple measures of students' learning; (3) planned opportunities for systematic feedback to students on their progress; (4) specific plan to use the data from assessment to improve individual course instruction and the overall curriculum; and (5) opportunities to communicate assessment results to the multiple constituencies of undergraduate psychology .

Most recently, as APA began its centennial year, it has initiated the development of a "first of its kind" national database on the 3,200 institutions throughout the United States having two- and four-year undergraduate programs in psychology. Such a comprehensive database may significantly improve APA's understanding of undergraduate psychology education and its ability to engage in strategic planning for the undergraduate major.

General Model for Curriculum Reform

As I reviewed the literature for this presentation, I began to perceive an emerging theme which is represented in Table 3:

Insert Table 3 about here

This curricular model touches upon the theme of classroom assessment in a very important way. The model basically states: If we want the results of classroom assessment to contribute to curriculum reform, then the outcomes we want in individual psychology courses should interact with psychology program

objectives which, in turn, should be consistent with the broader general education and institutional goals found in the mission statement of the College or University in which we teach.

Course goals are not in isolation from department goals: department goals are not in isolation from the general education (liberal arts) goals of the institution itself. On this view, assessment is the logical vehicle to drive curriculum development at all levels.

Distinctions are to be made, of course, among assessing students, assessing programs, and assessing the college-wide academic goals (in this case, the liberal arts curriculum). The role of each individual course is seen as extending and advancing some program objectives or college-wide academic goals but not necessarily all of them. Course instructors are not required to address all college-wide academic goals in all courses all of the time, nor should the assessment of students within courses be the only way of assessing psychology major program objectives. Other kinds of assessment strategies are needed to adequately assess general education and psychology program goals. These may involve: (1) polling alumni and employers, (2) requiring seniors to take a nationally standardized exam like the GRE Psychology Advanced Examination, (3) administering an in-house produced comprehensive examination, (4) requiring the writing of a thesis or compiling of a portfolio, or (5) offering a capstone course such as the Coordinating Seminar that might involve some of all of these

elements.

Academic Assessment at Rivier College.

But before I describe that capstone course I will briefly discuss how classroom outcomes, program objectives, and institutional goals concretely relate to each other in the particular instance of the place at which I teach, Rivier College. Assessment has been defined by Rivier College as a college-wide effort to document and verify the amount and quality of educational (academic) change in the student(s) between the point of entry and the point of completing an academic unit or sequence. This change must be clearly related to stated course, program or institutional goals and logically connected to the strategies that provide opportunity to achieve those stated goals.

The four-fold challenge for the College's subcommittee on "Assessment of Major Programs" has been to (1) convert college-wide academic goals and standards for classroom academic assessment into behavioral objectives; (2) encourage departments to incorporate the college-wide academic goals into their individual programs and course objectives; (3) encourage departments to clearly connect these goals with specific courses, course sequences, or classroom teaching strategies; and (4) encourage departments to identify specific criteria for the assessment of outcomes rather than simply saying that outcomes are assessed through tests and exams.

One outcome of Rivier's curriculum reform efforts (that is particularly relevant to the theme of this conference) has been the

successful integration of college-wide academic goals described in the College's mission statement with the academic standards on which classroom grades are based.

Table 4 presents how the College's seven general education goals relate to the academic standards used in assigning classroom grades to students.

Insert Table 4 about here

Our goal is to have individual course grades reflect the degree to which the student has achieved both course objectives and college-wide competencies (whenever possible and at an appropriate level for that course and subject matter).

Substantive faculty input was used to provide a firm foundation for this assessment evolution. Many full-assembly faculty meetings were devoted to asking very basic questions about college-wide academic goals, strategies, and outcome criteria: What do these goals mean to us? How do we implement these goals in our courses? How do we determine if these goals have been achieved by the students?

We asked similar questions about assessing the major: What courses or sequence of courses does each department employ to achieve these goals? What assessment criteria and instruments are to be used to determine their success? How does each department know the degree to which department strategies achieve these goals?

Results of these faculty discussions were circulated among departments so that chairpersons and program directors could see what their colleagues were doing. Part-time faculty became involved also. Although involvement in assessment caused some faculty to resent the added responsibility, generally it has increased faculty identification with the mission of the College and has allowed for a greater diversity and richness of responses relative to our general education/ institutional goals.

As you may have guessed, it is a process that is easier described than done. I discovered in faculty discussions that departmental goals, strategies, and outcome criteria: (1) often did not logically connect together; (2) could be quite vague or difficult to specify operationally; and (3) often did not relate to the larger institutional mission or liberal arts curriculum goals. Gaps would be noted between stated goals and their respective assessment methods. Only a few departments were already addressing college-wide academic goals with their programs or within individual courses. Feedback also indicated a lack of interdependence as if there were little connection between departments and the college itself (e.g., the student who is astonished to have a paper in his/her major course evaluated for punctuation, grammar, and spelling by a professor outside the English department). Often feedback indicated that there was a murky understanding of what assessment is -- even within the major.

There is a story from the exploits of Nasrudin that

illustrates in a poignant way the inherent difficulties involved in any attempt to precisely define the meaning of "academic assessment." (Shah, 1985, p.27). One day a group of seven scholars went to examine Nasrudin and asked him "What is Truth?"

Nasrudin replied by asking the seven scholars to first answer his question: "What is bread?"

One said that "Bread is food;" another that "It is flower and water." A third said, "It is a gift of God." A fourth said, "It's baked dough." Another said "It's a nutritious substance." The sixth said, "It depends on what you mean by "bread," and the seventh said that, "Nobody really knows what bread is."

After all these points of view were given, Nasrudin said, "How can I entrust matters of assessment and judgment to people like you? Is it or is it not strange that you cannot agree about something which you eat each day? When you decide what bread is, then it will be possible for you to decide other things."

And the lesson, of course, is that assesement, like bread, is a daily issue, something that we do every day in our classrooms, and yet remains a difficult concept to precisely define, since everyone will have a different understanding of it.

Despite these ambiguities and uncertainties, however, creative solutions to the problems of assessment emerged. Analyzing general goals down into more specific objectives and competencies would more precisely indicate pedagogy use and the component skills involved. A review of exams and syllabi of courses in a given major

program helped identify assessment strategies that were common across programs without reducing assessment to the course level.

Departments began to indicate how individual courses addressed not only departmental program objectives but also college-wide academic goals. Specific programs came to be seen as providing a catalyst for specific skills (i.e. English for communication skills, Philosophy for critical thinking skills) while the rest of the core curriculum and major programs would be viewed as extenders of these skills.

One indication of how well this has been done is through course evaluations. A sample course evaluation form currently in use is presented in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

Students use a 4-point Likert-type scale to evaluate both the teaching/learning process and the achievement of basic skills and competencies that are a part of the general education goals of the college (such as the improvement of writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills; clarification of personal values; and awareness of sex/gender issues and cultural diversity within the discipline.

A second outcome of Rivier College's curriculum reform efforts has been the integration of college-wide academic goals with psychology program objectives.

Table 6 identifies how the six major psychology program

objectives relate to the seven college-wide academic goals identified earlier.

Insert Table 6 about here

Notice that these program objectives are stated in broad, general terms and formulated within the framework of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives while, at the course level, the desired outcomes are more precisely described

Method

Coordinating Seminar

To assess the degree to which these psychology objectives were being achieved by students in the program, I developed a "capstone" course for our majors that they take during the last semester of their senior year. The course is called "Coordinating Seminar" because its purpose is to review and coordinate the information about psychology that students have acquired throughout their undergraduate experience, while focusing also on career opportunities, graduate school preparation, and controversial issues in the field. The syllabus for the course is presented in the Appendix.

The syllabus identifies the required and recommended textbooks for the course, the general instructional goals and the more specific learning objectives, skills, and competencies that the student should be able to demonstrate after completing the course.

Table 7 points out how the learning goals of the Coordinating Seminar can be related to one or more of our psychology program objectives and college-wide academic goals.

Insert Table 7 about here

Teaching strategies that are designed to provide the basis and opportunity for the skill or competency to be developed are logically connected to the learning objectives. Assessment criteria that are used to determine the success of the teaching strategies in helping students achieve the learning objectives are also logically connected to the learning objectives and are specified in behavioral terms. In this manner learning goals are clearly related to both teaching strategies and outcome assessment. The methods used to determine outcomes make clear what criteria will be employed to give evidence of the acquisition of the learning objectives so that the overall instructional goals are realized.

The criteria used to assess outcomes also provide a means of assessing whether the methods used to ensure desired outcomes really work. If outcomes were not achieved, why not? Perhaps the teaching strategies were inappropriate. Perhaps the methods were appropriate but not used in sufficient depth or frequency. Perhaps new methods are needed and/or old ones need to be refined. Or is the assessment method itself faulty? Analysis of outcomes can

provide important feedback on assessment of the teaching strategies and the assessment method itself.

Results and Discussion

How well does the course do its job? The effectiveness of this course in addressing graduate school, career, personal development (critical thinking), and program assessment issues described earlier is evaluated in a variety of ways.

Perhaps the most dramatic result pertains to performance on the GRE Psychology test that I've used as a final exam for the course to assess achievement of the first psychology program objective dealing with general knowledge of psychology. Table 8 identifies the mean, range, standard deviation, scaled score and percentile rank of 1982-83 GRE Psychology Final Exam Scores for our Psychology Majors between 1987-1992.

Insert Table 8 about here

When reviewing these results it should be noted that prior to 1989, the course was only held for students in the day college and hence the low number of students taking this exam; starting in 1989 the course was held at night so that our Evening school majors could also take the test.

Notice first the largely linear increase in mean raw scores during the past six years, from approximately the 14th percentile in 1987 to the 51st percentile in 1992. There was also an increase

in variability from 1989 to 1990 as reflected in the range and standard deviation. Somehow the introduction of the GRE Bowl activity affected students differentially; some students benefited greatly from the exercise while others did not. Also notice how the percentile rank remained rather stable from 1987 to 1989 and then jumped from 20 to 51 from 1989 to 1990 with the introduction of the GRE Bowl. After a moderate decline to the 33rd percentile in 1991, mean performance increased again to the 51st percentile with the introduction of the GRE Barron's book in 1992. Overall, majors scored in the lower 1/3 of the nation on this test, although some students have raw scores in the upper quartile and even the 95th percentile.

This is a modest achievement given the obvious limitations of the GRE for program assessment purposes: (a) the GRE is not designed to assess job-related skills and abilities; (b) norms are based on students bound for graduate school and are not fully appropriate for non-graduate school oriented students; and (c) its multiple-choice format doesn't adequately assess higher-order thinking skills, or the other college-wide academic goals and psychology program objectives of interest.

On the positive side, the test does allow one to compare majors relative to other graduate school oriented majors nationwide, in terms of the level of their general knowledge of psychology. Furthermore, individual student scores can be analysed, item by item, to identify content domains in which

students do well or poorly. Using this procedure, I've discovered that our students tend to do well on the social science oriented questions (that deal with personality theory, therapies, psychological disorders, lifespan development, social psychology) and not so well on experimental or natural science oriented questions (that deal with learning, cognition, perception, sensation, and physiology.)

On the basis of this information, our department has offered courses in cognitive psychology, history and systems, and physiological psychology on alternate years since 1988. Subsequent increase in the number of questions students correctly answer in these areas have been observed as a result. We will be introducing a new course in Sensation and Perception next Spring to address deficits detected in this area as well. This is one way of how a nationally standardized exam like the GRE can be used to feedback improvements into the curriculum of the major.

In terms of other measures used in the course, results indicate that students' performance on the take-home and in-class tests are about 95%. Performance during the GRE Bowl, in the controversial issues debate, on the writing assignment, and in all the other teaching activities have been adequately assessed using an observational checklist composed of the outcome criteria.

Other kinds of assessment strategies have also testified to the success of the Seminar in meeting course goals and program objectives. According to alumni survey responses and requests for

letters of recommendations from students, I've been able to document an increase in the number of students applying and being admitted to graduate schools and who obtain job positions in the human services as a result of the skills imparted by this course. According to the course evaluations and in my discussions with majors in the seminar, students have also come to express an overall increase in the level of satisfaction with their undergraduate experience in psychology at the college.

Conclusion

A capstone course for psychology majors such as the Coordinating Seminar can be an effective vehicle for assessment of both your departmental goals and of college-wide institutional goals. It can tell you in what areas of the psychology curriculum your students are strongest and in what areas they are weakest. It can also help you prepare your majors for what lies before them after graduation. You'll be surprised what good such a course can do for your majors.

The Sermon of Nasrudin

I'd like to conclude with a story titled "The Sermon of Nasrudin" (Shah, 1985, p.21)

One Friday the people of the village in which Nasrudin lived went asked him to preach a sermon in their mosque so they could play a joke on him. Nasrudin agreed. After he mounted the pulpit, he said: "O people! Do you know what I am going to tell you?"

The congregation answered, "No, we do not know." Nasrudin

replied, "Until you know, I cannot say." He then descended from the pulpit and went home.

Slightly chagrined, the congregation went to his house again, and asked him to preach the following Friday. When the day came, Nasrudin began his sermon with the same question as before: "O people! Do you know what I am going to tell you?"

This time the congregation said: "Yes, we know." Nasrudin replied, "In that case, there is no need for me to detain you any longer. You may go." He then returned home.

Not to be outdone, the villagers prevailed upon Nasrudin one more time to preach at the next Friday day of prayer. On the appointed day Nasrudin again began his sermon: "O people! Do you know or do you not know what I am going to tell you?"

This time the congregation replied, "Some of us do, and others do not." Nasrudin said, "Excellent! Then let those who know communicate their knowledge to those who do not." And off to home he went.

I'm the last speaker and this is the end of my presentation. Let those of us who know about the issues of assessment in the classroom communicate our knowledge to those who do not. Thank you for your attention.

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Table 1

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

- 1984 -- Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education
(U.S. Department of Education, 1984)
- 1985 -- National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education
(University of South Carolina at Columbia)
(Adelman, 1986)
- 1985 -- Assessing educational outcomes (Ewell, 1985, September)
- 1987 -- Student outcomes assessment: What institutions stand to gain (Halpern, 1987)
- 1987 -- Thinking about assessment: Perspectives for presidents and chief academic officers
(American Association for Higher Education)
(Rossman & El-Khawas, 1987)
- 1987 -- Institutional Research Program for Higher Education (ETS)
-- Program Self-Assessment Service (ETS)
-- Major Field Achievement Tests (ETS/GRE Board)
(ETS, 1987)
- 1988 -- Performance and judgment: Essays on principles and practice in the assessment of college student learning
(Office of Educational Research and Improvement)
(see Appelbaum's "Assessment through the major")
- 1992 -- Program review and educational quality in the major: A faculty handbook
(Association of American Colleges, 1992)
- 1993 -- "Principles of good practice for assessing student learning"
(American Assoc. for Higher Education Assessment, 1993)

Table 2

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF
THE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

- 1982 -- "Undergraduate Education in the Next Decade"
(Teaching of Psychology special 1982 edition)
- 1987 -- "Developing and evaluating undergraduate psychology
programs" (95th Annual Convention of APA)
- 1987 -- "Assessing student outcomes" (Eison, 1987)
- 1988 -- "Assessing student outcomes for psychology majors"
(Halpern, 1988)
- 1988 -- "Psychology's assessment role" (Eison & Palladino, 1988)
- 1990 -- Founding of the Council of Undergraduate Psychology
Programs (CUPP), sponsor of symposia on assessment
- 1991 -- "Liberal Education, Study in Depth, and the Arts and
Sciences Major -- Psychology"
(McGovern, Furumoto, Halpern, Kimble, & McKeachie, 1991)
- 1991 -- APA National Conference on Enhancing the Quality of
Undergraduate Education in Psychology
(St. Mary's College of Maryland)
- 1992 -- National Data Base of Undergraduate Psychology Programs
(APA's Office of Demographic, Employment, and Educational
Research).

Table 3

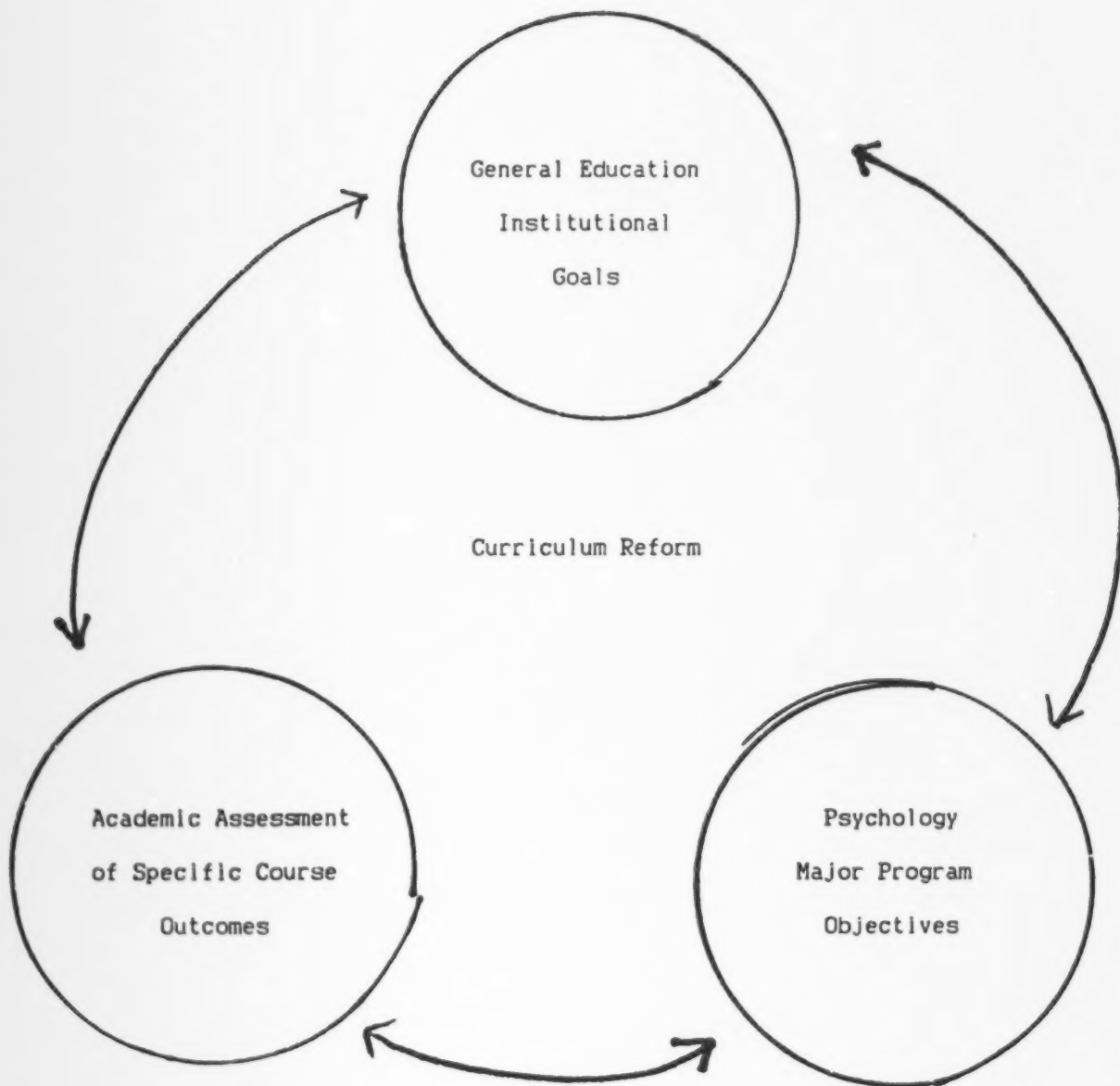


Table 4

Comparison of Academic Goals with Assessment Standards

College-Wide Academic Goals What we hope to achieve	Standards for Academic Assessment What we say we assess
1. Help an individual live a creative, generous, and intellectually rewarding life	▶ the ability to <u>make and support value judgments</u> about the social or ethical implications of course material or <u>judge</u> between competing solutions
2. Promote ethical thinking and a strong commitment to social justice	▶ the ability to <u>apply</u> information, concepts, or skills from one part of the course to other areas and <u>solve problems</u> using this knowledge or these skills
3. Foster a sense of the sacred, particularly as expressed through the Catholic tradition, and an understanding of what it means to be truly human	▶ the ability to <u>synthesize</u> course material—discovering larger patterns or relationships, discriminating among multiple views, and/or viewing the subject within a cross-disciplinary or global perspective
4. Develop the ability to place oneself, one's discipline, and one's society in historical, cultural, and global perspective.	▶ the ability to <u>think critically</u> about course material in the light of other information, theories, or points of view—demonstrating an awareness of the implications and limitations of any one perspective or approach
5. Develop the ability to reason critically, both verbally and quantitatively, and use sound judgment	▶ the ability to <u>communicate</u> one's understanding and knowledge with clarity and persuasiveness— orally, visually, quantitatively and/or in writing
6. Develop the capacity for precise and articulate communication—written, oral, visual, and quantitative.	▶ an <u>understanding</u> of course content—the information, concepts, theories, or skills required of the specific subject and discipline
7. Develop an understanding of the special disciplinary approaches and contributions of the arts and sciences	

RIVIER COLLEGE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING INSTRUCTION

TABLE 5

Evaluation responses are valued for two purposes: (1) to evaluate the teaching/learning process and (2) to help in the assessment of basic skills and competencies that are part of the educational goals of Rivier College

Course Number/Title _____ Year _____
Instructor: _____ Fall _____ Spring _____ Summer _____

* Put an "X" in the Appropriate Column*

COURSE CONTENT

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Not Applicable

1. The course was planned carefully.
2. The way that this course was organized facilitated the learning process.
3. Course objectives were clear.
4. Course objectives - as outlined - were met.
5. The text(s) used contributed to my understanding of the subject
6. Classroom references to the text(s) were adequate.

REQUIREMENTS

7. Projects, papers, exams, and assignments were explained so that I understood what was required.
8. Course requirements addressed material or skills emphasized in the course.
9. The amount of work required was appropriate.
10. Examination questions were phrased clearly.
11. Feedback on student work was adequate and prompt.
12. Office hours or appointment times were available or easily arranged.

CLASSROOM

13. Classes began and ended on time.
14. The instructor was responsive to student needs.
15. The classroom atmosphere encouraged discussion and questions.
16. I was able to express opinions and ideas that differed from those of others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course:

17. helped me to improve writing skills
18. helped me to improve speaking skills.
19. helped me to improve critical thinking skills.
20. helped me to clarify my personal values
21. helped me to appreciate sex/gender issues or sex/gender perspectives, within the discipline.
22. helped me to become more aware of global and multicultural issues.

Table 6

PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Each graduate in Psychology should show, in measurable ways, the following knowledge and abilities:

1. Knowledge of (a) technical terminology and specific facts,
(b) literary forms and conventions,
(c) historical trends and sequences,
(d) organizational classifications and categories,
(e) evaluative criteria and methods of inquiry, and
(f) major theories, principles, and generalizations within
the field of psychology.
(e.g., History and Systems: "describe major historical developments
in psychology") (College-Wide Academic Goals 4 and 7)
2. Ability to translate, interpret and extrapolate psychological
information.
(e.g., Social Psychology: "read, abstract, and interpret social
psychological research") (College-Wide Academic Goals 5 and 7)
3. Ability to apply knowledge of psychology to particular and
concrete situations.
(e.g., Health Psychology: "relate psychological principles,
concepts, and laws to health issues") (College-Wide Academic Goals
4, 5, and 7)
4. Ability to analyze psychological information into its elements,
relationships, and organizational principles.
(e.g., Statistics: "perform statistical analyses") (College-Wide
Academic Goals 5 and 7)
5. Ability to synthesize psychological information in the
production of a unique written or oral communication,
plan or set of hypotheses.
(e.g., Experimental Psychology: design an original research
proposal") (College-Wide Academic Goals 5 and 6)
6. Ability to evaluate the value of psychological information
and methods for understanding human experience and behavior
using quantitative and qualitative criteria.
(e.g., General Psychology: "analyze, evaluate, and discuss opposing
viewpoints on controversial issues in psychology") (College-Wide
Academic Goals 1, 2, and 3)

Table 7

Table 7. Sample Course Learning Outcomes, Psychology Program Objectives, and College-Wide Academic Goals.

Course Learning Outcome 1

"recognize and define psychological terminology and identify important features of major psychological concepts and theories."

Psychology Program Objective 1

"knowledge of technical terminology and specific facts, major theories, principles, and generalizations."

College-Wide Goal 1

"develop an understanding of the special disciplinary approaches and contributions of the arts and sciences."

Course Learning Outcome 2

"interpret psychological data from a variety of alternative perspectives."

Psychology Program Objective 2

"ability to translate, interpret and extrapolate psychological information."

College-Wide Goal 4

"develop the ability to place oneself, one's discipline, and one's society in historical, cultural, and global perspective."

Course Learning Outcome 3

"communicate acquired knowledge of psychological concepts, principles, and theories with clarity and substance both orally and in writing."

Psychology Program Objective 5

"ability to synthesize psychological information in the production of a unique written or oral communication, plan or set of hypotheses."

College-Wide Goal 6

"develop the capacity for precise and articulate communication--written, oral, visual, and quantitative."

Table 8

MEAN, RANGE, STANDARD DEVIATION, SCALED SCORE AND PERCENTILE RANK
OF GRE PSYCHOLOGY FINAL EXAM SCORES FOR PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS ASSESSED
BETWEEN 1987-1992.

	Year of Testing						T/A
	1987	1988	1989	1990*	1991	1992**	
No. of Students	4	2	8	9	16	10	49
Mean Raw Score	54	58	59	84	70	85	72
Range	46-71	48-68	39-79	58-117	35-104	52-129	35-129
Standard Dev.	10.16	10.00	11.50	19.89	16.88	24.00	20.97
Scaled Score	430	450	450	540	490	540	490
Percentile Rank	14	20	20	51	33	51	33

* GRE Bowl introduced

** GRE Barron's Study Guide introduced

APPENDIX

PSY 408-E

COORDINATING SEMINAR

Spring 1993

Wednesday 6:30- 9:00 p.m.

Dr. Paul Cunningham

Campus Office: Regis Hall, Room F (ext. 8272)

Home Office: (603) 673-7389

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A review and coordination of the subject matter acquired throughout the undergraduate experience focusing on career opportunities, graduate school preparation, and controversial issues in the field.

II. TEXTS

A. Required

1. Atkinson, R. L., Atkinson, R. C., Smith, E. E., & Bem, D. J. (1993). Introduction to psychology (11th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. This text is considered by many to be the most authoritative and comprehensive introductory text. Therefore, it is chosen for our review.
2. Rubinstein, J. & Slife, B. (Eds.). (1992). Taking sides: Clashing views on controversial psychological issues (7th ed.). Guilford, CT: Dushkin. This book is specifically designed to stimulate critical thinking and initiate lively and informed dialogue on psychological issues.
3. Palmer, Edward L. (1989). GRE psychology: How to prepare for the Graduate Record Examination in psychology. New York: Barron's Educational Series. This study guide is designed to provide a comprehensive review of the main areas in psychology, help identify topics with which you may be least familiar and on which you should concentrate, and aid you in your final exam preparation.

B. Recommended

1. Keith-Spiegel, P. (1991). The complete guide to graduate school admission. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. This step-by step guide provides extremely useful information about how to successfully select and gain admission into master's and doctoral programs.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS and LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A. Instructional Goals. The instructional goals of this course are to:

1. review and coordinate information about psychology that majors have acquired throughout their undergraduate experience;
2. provide Psychology majors an opportunity to develop their ability to think critically and use sound judgment by discussing current controversial issues in psychology;
3. help graduating seniors develop resume writing, interviewing and job search skills appropriate to applied fields in psychology;
4. encourage graduate school and career exploration/research prior to graduation.

B. Learning Objectives/ Skills/ Competencies. After completing this course the student should be able to:

1. recognize and define basic psychological terminology and identify important features of major psychological concepts and theories;
2. interpret psychological data from a variety of alternative perspectives;
3. communicate acquired knowledge of psychological concepts, principles, and theories with clarity and substance both orally and in writing;
4. write a research report using American Psychological Association (APA) style format;
5. identify, critically evaluate, and debate ethical problems and controversial issues within the profession of psychology, distinguishing between

conclusions supported by logical or empirical evidence and conclusions based on opinion:

6. compose a professional resume;
7. describe and demonstrate interviewing and job search skills;
8. give examples of career opportunities in psychology;
9. describe the graduate school application process.

IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES and OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The teaching strategies designed to help facilitate students' progress toward specific objectives and the criteria employed to give evidence of learning goal achievement are described below.

- A. Weekly Review Tests/ GRE Psychology Test Final Exam/ GRE Challenge Bowl. Weekly take-home tests, in-class tests, the GRE final examination, and the GRE Challenge Bowl are employed to provide students the opportunity to achieve learning objective 1 (i.e., to recognize and define basic psychological terminology and identify important features of major psychological concepts and theories).

1. Teaching Strategies

- a. Weekly Review Tests. Students are administered 13 weekly take-home and in-class tests. Each test is based on one and one-half chapters of the Atkinson et al. psychology text. In-class tests are composed of items sampled from the take-home tests. These tests provide an opportunity to (1) assess students' knowledge of the chapters reviewed, (2) help guide students in reviewing their knowledge of major areas of psychology, and (3) prepare students for taking the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Psychology Test as a final examination. Students are prohibited from making copies of tests or answer sheets.
- b. GRE Psychology Final Exam. The final examination is an actual 1982-83 GRE Psychology Achievement Test. This test is used to assess students' overall knowledge of the major areas of psychology and to compare their performance with national norms.
- c. GRE Challenge Bowl. Students will come to a clearer understanding about the range of topics included in the GRE Psychology Test by participating in a "GRE Challenge Bowl," an activity simulating the "College Bowl" TV quiz show. Two comparable groups of students formed on the basis of grade point average compete for points as they answer sample questions from an actual 1988-89 GRE Psychology Test. Each group gets to answer a question. If one group misses a question, the other group gets to answer it and then their own. The group that answers the most questions correctly by the end of the semester gets first choice of selected psychology books made available by the instructor.

2. Outcome Assessment Criteria

The learning outcome is evaluated on the basis of the student's ability to:

- a. recognize, identify, define or distinguish vocabulary terms, factual information, historical developments, current specializations, contemporary approaches and perspectives, scientific procedures, therapeutic treatments, and fundamental theories and laws in the field of psychology:

- b. recognize correct illustrations or examples of psychological definitions or principles;
- c. select the "best" definition of a psychological concept;
- d. illustrate psychological principles by giving examples;
- e. apply psychological propositions and generalizations to an actual (or fictional) situation;
- f. supply or recognize inferences which may be drawn from a psychological principle or generalization;
- g. compare or contrast psychological perspectives on a problem;
- h. actively contribute his/her own "guess" and argues intelligently for his/her own views during the GRE Bowl activity.

B. Writing Assignment: Complementary Perspectives. The writing project on complementary perspectives in psychology is employed to provide students the opportunity to achieve learning objectives 2-4 (i.e., interpret psychological data from a variety of alternative perspectives; communicate acquired knowledge of psychological concepts, principles, and theories with clarity and substance both orally and in writing; write a research report using APA style format).

1. Teaching Strategy

Writing Assignment: Complementary Perspectives. Students will be assigned a current newspaper article or magazine article that describes some example of human behavior. Students will type an essay (minimum six pages, APA editorial style) that explains how a psychologist might explain the behavior from each of the five major approaches to the modern study of psychology (i.e., biological, psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive, and phenomenological). The idea that different perspectives are not necessarily contradictory but can in fact complement one another is important and can be further developed through this activity.

2. Outcome Assessment Criteria

Learning outcomes are evaluated on the basis of the student's ability to:

- a. set up a logically consistent scheme for classifying or interpreting a sample behavior in terms of five psychological perspectives;
- b. translate the meaning of each perspective into his/her own words;
- c. recognize the primary issues of each perspective and gather/ assess appropriate supporting materials;
- d. supply or recognize inferences which may be drawn from each of the perspectives;
- e. compare and contrast each perspective;
- f. organize ideas effectively;
- g. formulate ideas in an interesting fashion (i.e., a lackluster job may indicate a poor understanding of the perspective or little preparation and effort);
- h. demonstrate familiarity with the literary forms and conventions of editorial style as it is applied in American Psychological Association (APA) journals.

C. Debate of Controversial Issues in Psychology/ Supplementary Library Resource Readings. The controversial issues debate activity and supplementary library resource readings are employed to provide students the opportunity to achieve learning objective 5 (i.e., identify, critically evaluate, and debate ethical problems and controversial issues within the profession of psychology,

distinguishing between conclusions supported by logical or empirical evidence and conclusions based on opinion).

1. Teaching Strategies

- a. "Change-Your-Mind" Debate of Controversial Issues in Psychology. The "change-your-mind" debate technique basically involves having students who clearly feel one way or the other on each controversial issue sit on opposite sides of the classroom and debate the issue back and forth. Undecided students form a third group that also participates by asking questions or challenging assertions. Students are free to change their minds as the debate progresses. When they do, they show the change by moving to the appropriate section of the room. The seating pattern thus reflects the tide of thinking at any given moment.

The aim is not to win the debate but to explore the issue vigorously. Students are thus continuously probed about their responses: Are you sure? Are you making a judgment that others might not agree with? Are there other alternatives? Have you considered other possibilities? Have you examined your own motives here? Do you have enough data for the conclusions you are making?

This activity provides students the opportunity to: (1) examine the relationship between psychological concepts and controversial psychological issues, and (2) work out evaluative criteria and personal resolutions of the issues and clarify personal values without locking them into positions they may not feel comfortable with as the debate progresses.

- b. Supplementary Library Resource Readings. Journal articles, book chapters, and other sources of current information about controversial issues discussed in class will be placed on pressure reserve at Regina Library on a weekly basis. Students are required to read these supplementary materials in addition to the assigned weekly readings.

2. Outcome Assessment Criteria

The learning outcome is evaluated on the basis of the student's ability to:

- a. identify conclusions and supporting statements;
- b. identify logical fallacies in arguments;
- c. identify what unstated assumptions are involved in what is said;
- d. recognize the point of view or bias of a writer in a psychological account;
- e. distinguish fact from hypothesis and opinion;
- f. distinguish relevant from extraneous material;
- g. note how one idea relates to another;
- h. recognize and weigh values involved in alternative arguments;
- i. identify and appraise alternative beliefs critically;
- j. cite the specific points in each issue which are accurate or inaccurate as well as the reasons why they are judged in that way;
- k. assess the general accuracy of facts;
- l. judge the logical accuracy of statements in relation to the stated conclusions;
- m. make a connection between textbook information and supplementary library reading material.

D. Career Development Workshops/ Alumni Guest Speaker Presentations.

The resume and interview workshop videos, resume critique, mock interview, and alumni guest speaker presentations are employed to provide students the opportunity to achieve learning objectives 6-8 (i.e., compose a professional resume; describe and demonstrate interviewing and job search skills; give examples of career opportunities in psychology).

1. Teaching Strategies

- a. Resume and Interview Skills Videotapes, Resume Critique, Mock Interview. The Director of the Career Development and Placement Office (CDPO) will speak to students about the services offered by that Office and sponsor a series of workshops dealing with resume writing, interviewing, and job searching skills. These sessions will be tailored for you as a Psychology major. Formal requirements of this course are that students:
 - (1) view the resume writing workshop videotape before February 10 (available from the CDPO);
 - (2) submit a professional resume on February 17 for critique by the CDPO;
 - (3) view the interview skills workshop videotape (available from the CDPO);
 - (4) participate in a videotaped "mock interview" at the CDPO.
- b. Alumni Guest Speaker Presentations. Rivier Alumni will speak about "life after Rivier," including their personal educational and career experiences as well as about more general job opportunities for Psychology majors graduating with a liberal arts degree.

2. Outcome Assessment Criteria

Learning outcomes are evaluated on the basis of the student's ability to:

- a. use the information provided by the CDPO to generate her/his own insights and applications in the writing of a professional resume and in one's conduct during the mock interview;
- b. appear attentive, ask clear and constructive questions, answer questions intelligently, and build on others' ideas during CDPO and guest speaker presentations.

F. Classroom Lectures and Class Participation. The weekly classroom lectures and participation in class activities/exercises are employed to provide students additional opportunities to achieve learning objectives 1-9 (including describing the graduate school application process).

1. Teaching Strategy

- A. Weekly Classroom Lectures and Class Participation. In conjunction with handouts, overhead transparencies, computer simulations, and videotapes, classroom lectures and exercises will provide the instructor an opportunity to (1) highlight key ideas or questions regarding the graduate school application process, (2) present examples to clarify abstract or difficult textbook material, (3) provide exercises so students can practice using the material presented in class, and (4) make clear how information presented in the course might be used in everyday life.

2. Outcome Assessment Criteria

Learning outcomes are evaluated on the basis of the student's ability to:

- appear attentive and prepared to recite in class her/his understanding of current course material, complete homework assignments on time, and actively participate during classroom activities, frequently voicing one's own views and opinions.
- demonstrate the ability to understand the graduate school application process when asked to do so both orally and in writing.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING WEIGHTS SUMMARY

<u>Course Requirements</u>	<u>Grading Weights</u>
Take-home tests	20%
In-class tests	25%
Final Examination	15%
GRE Challenge Bowl	5%
Writing Assignment	10%
Debate of Controversial Issues	10%
Supplementary Library Resource Readings	3%
Writing Resume Workshop video	1%
Interview Skills Workshop video	1%
Resume Critique	3%
Mock Interview	4%
Lectures/Class Participation	3%
Total = 100%	

VI. CLASSROOM POLICIES

- Attendance.** Following college policy, a record of attendance will be made. It is common courtesy to notify the professor in the event of leaving in the middle of class, prolonged illness, accident or similar emergency.
- Make-up Policy.** There are no makeups for missed in-class tests or homework assignments. You are strongly encouraged to take all tests and do all homework assignments as scheduled. Special arrangements for unusual circumstances are solely at the discretion of the professor.

VII. COURSE OUTLINE and SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topics / Tests / Homework / Due Dates</u>
January 20	- Introduction to the Course - GRE Challenge Bowl
Homework-----	- Read Chap. 1 (entire) and One-Half of Chapter 2; do take-home test 1-A. - Read Introduction and controversial Issue 3 in <u>Taking Sides</u>
January 27	- Take-home Test 1-A due / In-class Test 1-A - Can Experiments Using Animals Be Justified? (Issue 3) - GRE Challenge Bowl
Homework-----	- Read remainder of Chap. 2 and Chap. 3 (entire); do take-home Test 2-A. - Read controversial Issue 12 or 13 (class choice)

- February 3 - Take-home Test 2-A due / In-class Test 2-A
 - Are Children of Divorced Parents at Greater Risk? (Issue 12) or
 - Should Adolescents Be Allowed to Make Decisions About Abortions
 Without Parental Involvement? (Issue 13)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Homework----- Read Chap. 4 (entire) and One-Half of Chap. 5: do take-home Test 3-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 7
-
- February 10 - Take-home Test 3-A due / In-class Test 3-A
 - Has Science Discredited ESP? (Issue 7)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Guest Speaker: Sue Posluszny, Director of CDPO
 Last day to view the RESUME WRITING video
- Homework----- Read remainder of Chap. 5 and Chap. 6 (entire); do take-home Test
 4-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 19
-
- February 17 - Take-home Test 4-A due / In-class Test 4-A
 - Would Legalizing Drugs Have Beneficial Effects on Society? (Issue 19)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Professional RESUME due today
- Homework----- Read Chaps. 7, 8, and 9: do take-home Test 5-A and 6-A
 - Read controversial Issue 10
-
- February 24 - WINTER VACATION
-
- March 3 - Take-home Test 5-A and 6-A due / In-class Tests 5-A and 6-A.
 - Do Gender Differences Originate from Biological Factors? (Issue 10)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
 - RESUME CRITIQUE (Career Development Workshop)
- Homework----- Read Chap. 10 (entire) and One-Half Chap. 11: do take-home Test 7-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 8
-
- March 10 - Take-home Test 7-A due / In-class Test Test 7-A
 - Can Computers Help Us Understand the Human Mind? (Issue 8)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Homework----- Read remainder of Chap. 11 and Chap. 12 (entire); do take-home Test
 8-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 9
-
- March 17 - Take-home Test 8-A due / In-class Test 8-A
 - Class Demonstration: Lie Detection and the GSR
 - Can Intelligence Be Increased? (Issue 9)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Homework----- Read Chaps. 13, 14, and 15: do take-home Tests 9-A and 10-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 6
-
- March 24 No Class (See regular homework assignments)
-

- March 31 - Take-home Test 9-A and 10-A due / In-class Tests 9-A and 10-A.
 - Is Our State of Mind Responsible for Our State of Health? (Issue 6)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Homework----- Read Chap 16 (entire) and One-Half of Chap. 17: do take-home Test 11-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 14

- April 7 - Take-home Test 11-A due / In-class Test 11-A
 - Should Psychotherapists Allow Suicide? (Issue 14)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- Homework----- Read remainder of Chap. 17 and Chap. 18 (entire): do take-home Test 12-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 16

- April 14 - Take-home Test 12-A due / In-class Test 12-A
 - Should Psychotherapy Include Religious Values? (Issue 16)
 - GRE Challenge Bowl
- "Complementary Perspectives in Psychology" WRITING ASSIGNMENT due today.
- Homework----- Read Chap. 19 (entire); do take-home Test 13-A.
 - Read controversial Issue 1

- April 21 - Course Evaluations
 - Take-home Test 13-A due / In-class Test 13-A
 - Can Deception in Research Be Justified? (Issue 1)
 - GRE Psychology Test Final Examination (Part I) (50 minutes)
- Last day to view the Interview Skills video and conduct the Mock Interview

Final Examination: GRE Psychology Test (continued) (2 hours)

The above objectives, requirements, and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

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